

NCIDQ Examination

Exam and IDEP Eligibility Requirements

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NCIDQ maintains minimum eligibility requirements to participate in the [Interior Design Experience Program \(IDEP\)](#) and take the NCIDQ Examination. NCIDQ's research shows that at least six years of combined college-level interior design education and interior design work experience are essential to prepare you for the examination and professional practice. Because education builds an essential foundation for successful practice, you must complete most or all of your education before you begin your interior design work experience.

All coursework used to satisfy the eligibility requirements must be taken for college credit. Continuing education, audit and non-credit courses will not be accepted. Education is evaluated based on a review of college or university transcript(s) and, when necessary, copies of course descriptions from the college or university catalog in force at the beginning of coursework.

All work experience used to satisfy the eligibility requirements must be in the field of interior design. Work experience can be full-time or part-time. NCIDQ recommends that you to work under the direct supervision of an NCIDQ Certificate holder, a registered interior designer, or an architect who offers interior design services. *NCIDQ does not accept teaching as interior design work experience.*

For exam applicants who will begin to accumulate their applicable work experience in 2008 or later, qualified supervision will be required for all hours of interior design work experience. See [Supervised Experience Requirement](#) below.

IDEP is optional in most jurisdictions. However, it is strongly recommended as a structured, comprehensive method for completing your entry-level work experience. Your direct supervisor and outside mentor will help you get well-rounded training in your first years of work, and you'll finish the program well-prepared for the NCIDQ Examination. You can also [save money on the exam!](#) Check with [your jurisdiction](#) to find out if IDEP is required for licensure.

Please note that NCIDQ does not grant exceptions to the eligibility criteria. NCIDQ does not review portfolios, client lists, endorsements or any other material submitted in lieu of college transcripts or work history.

You can qualify to participate in IDEP and sit for the NCIDQ Examination by completing one of the

following five education/experience routes. Apply to enter IDEP at the beginning of the work experience portion of your route. Apply for the exam after you have completed all education and work experience. See [When to Apply](#) below for details.

Route 1

- **Education**

A bachelor's degree (minimum) from an interior design program accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA, formerly known as FIDER). The degree program must include no less than 120 semester or 180 quarter credit hours, of which no less than 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours are interior design coursework.

To qualify, the degree program must have been CIDA-accredited at the date of graduation or must have become CIDA-accredited within the two-year period following the graduation date. A list of accredited programs is available from [CIDA](#).

- **Experience**

No less than 3,520 hours of interior design work experience. This can be completed in approximately two years if you work full-time.

Up to half of the required hours (no more than 1,760 hours) may be earned while you are still in school. You must have completed at least 96 semester or 144 quarter credit hours of education before you can begin to count work experience toward this requirement. In addition, if you receive academic credit for work experience, you cannot count that work experience toward this requirement. In all cases, the final 1,760 hours of work experience must be earned after the education program is completed.

Route 2

- **Education**

A bachelor's degree (minimum) in an interior design program NOT accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation. The degree program must include no less than 120 semester or 180 quarter credit hours, of which no less than 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours are interior design coursework.

- **Experience**

No less than 3,520 hours of interior design work experience. This can be completed in approximately two years if you work full-time.

Up to half of the required hours (no more than 1,760 hours) may be earned while you are still in school. You must have completed at least 96 semester or 144 quarter credit hours of education before you can begin to count work experience toward this requirement. In addition, if you receive academic credit for work experience, you cannot count that work experience toward this requirement. In all cases, the final 1,760 hours of work experience must be earned after the education program is completed.

Route 3

- **Education**

A bachelor's degree (minimum) in any other major in a program of no less than 120 semester or

180 quarter credit hours, AND no less than 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours of interior design coursework that culminates in a degree.

This route is primarily intended for career changers with a bachelor's degree in another field (architecture, English, nursing, psychology, etc.) who have returned to school for an interior design degree.

- **Experience**

No less than 3,520 hours of interior design work experience. This can be completed in approximately two years if you work full-time.

Up to half of the required hours (no more than 1,760 hours) may be earned while you are still in school. You must have completed at least 96 semester or 144 quarter credit hours of education before you can begin to count work experience toward this requirement. In addition, if you receive academic credit for work experience, you cannot count that work experience toward this requirement. In all cases, the final 1,760 hours of work experience must be earned after the education program is completed.

Route 4

- **Education**

No less than 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours of interior design coursework that culminates in a degree or diploma.

- **Experience**

No less than 5,280 hours of interior design work experience. This can be completed in approximately three years if you work full-time. All work experience must be earned after the education program is completed.

Route 5

Note: This route does not qualify for IDEP entry.

- **Education**

No less than 40 semester or 60 quarter credit hours of interior design coursework that culminates in a certificate, degree or diploma.

- **Experience**

No less than 7,040 hours of interior design work experience. This can be completed in approximately four years if you work full-time. All work experience must be earned after the education program is completed.

When to Apply

- **IDEP**

Routes 1, 2 and 3: If you choose to participate in IDEP, you may apply after you have completed 96 semester/144 quarter credit hours toward your bachelor's degree. At this point, you can begin your interior design work experience.

Route 4: Apply for IDEP after you have completed all the required credit hours and have received your degree or diploma. At this point, you can begin your interior design work experience.

- **Exam**

ALL Routes: You must complete all eligibility requirements by the date you submit your application to NCIDQ, not by a future examination date. In other words, you must complete all required interior design education and work experience before you can apply to NCIDQ to take the exam.

Supervised Experience Requirement

Exam candidates who **began** accumulating their interior design work experience on or after January 1, 2008 are required to complete all of that experience under the direct supervision of an NCIDQ Certificate holder, a licensed/registered interior designer, or an architect who offers interior design services. Independent practice time and work done under the supervision of an unlicensed practitioner cannot be counted toward the work experience requirement.

The supervised experience requirement does not apply to exam candidates who **begin** to accumulate their interior design work experience on or before December 31, 2007.

This requirement is important to understand if you are a future exam applicant who is not participating in IDEP. Exam applicants who have completed IDEP will automatically satisfy the Supervised Work Experience Requirement because qualified supervision is required for IDEP participation.

Jurisdictional Requirements

NCIDQ's examination eligibility requirements may differ from the minimum requirements for licensure/registration in your jurisdiction. Please review our list of [regulatory agencies](#). If you intend to become registered or licensed in a regulated state or province, you must contact the appropriate agency before completing the NCIDQ application to verify state/provincial requirements for licensure.

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1200 18th Street NW, Suite 1001, Washington, DC 20036-2506

Phone: (202) 721-0220 Fax: (202) 721-0221

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